



# Current Threats to Archeological Resources



## Riverbank Erosion:

- Flooding and erosion are the greatest threats to the archeological resources.
- Substantial portions of the Knife River banks have been lost over the past few decades, leading to the irretrievable loss of adjacent village remnants and archeological sites.
- Massive flood and ice events have impacted river banks, archeological sites, park infrastructure, and county roads.
- The 2011 Missouri River flood resulted in the saturation of Knife River banks for a five-month period.
- Archeologists have resorted to excavation of threatened archeological deposits at the park to document and preserve resources before they are lost to erosion.



## Infrastructure Location:

- The first visitor center was an acquired farmhouse that was built on the edge of the Big Hidatsa Village and Taylor Bluff sites. This farmhouse was determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and was moved off the site in the mid-1990s.
- The NPS maintenance facility is a visual intrusion in the cultural landscape of the park, particularly for the Big Hidatsa Village, one of the park's most important cultural sites and a primary interpretive site.
- Our state and tribal partners have recommended that the maintenance facility be relocated to remove this visual impact in the park.
- The maintenance facility is located near sacred sites of the tribes traditionally associated with the resources present within the park.
- The current park visitor center has water infiltration problems. This issue has been addressed many times, but no solution eliminated the water infiltration entirely resulting in a threat to museum collections housed in the basement.
- Highway 37 and County Road 18, run through the park and are threatened by river bank erosion.



## Burrowing Mammals:

- Native burrowing mammals, such as pocket gophers affect archeological sites by displacing soil and artifacts from their chronological sequence.
- Artifacts are continuously exposed by gopher activity; park staff monitors the disturbance for important or unusual artifacts that are later placed in the museum collection.
- In 2006, the National Historic Landmark (NHL) program elevated the threat level for the Big Hidatsa Village citing the effects of rodent burrowing as a cause of impending loss of site integrity.
- In 2009, the park instituted a regular trapping program for pocket gophers to mitigate the impacts of this species on the archeological sites.



## Vegetation Encroachment:

- The encroachment of woody and overgrown vegetation into archeological sites causes displacement of chronological sequence and makes some site areas inaccessible for archeological research.
- Impacts from vegetation are continuing to degrade conditions at the primary village sites in the park.